

House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member

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Accountability has gone to the bottom, now it must go to the top

WASHINGTON D.C.— Today witnesses told the House Armed Services Committee that responsibility for the abuses at Abu Ghraib does not only lie with the enlisted personnel working in the prison. It also extends to senior officials at the Pentagon.

“The Schlesinger report answers our questions regarding the role of the chain of command in the prisoner abuse scandal. Much responsibility for misconduct ultimately lies with senior civilian Pentagon leaders who created a post-war operational environment that facilitated these abuses. Congress must now demand accountability,” said Ranking Member Ike Skelton (MO).

“The Schlesinger report found that what happened at Abu Ghraib resulted from a series of flawed judgments by senior DOD officials,” continued Skelton. “DoD officials’ failure to plan for detention operations, conflicting guidance about acceptable interrogation techniques, insufficient resourcing of prison operations and failure to adequately respond to requests for help from military leaders in Iraq all contributed to the tragic sequence of events at Abu Ghraib.”

“Problems on the ground in Iraq compounded the administration's failure to plan for detention operations after the war,” noted Representative Rick Larsen (WA). “The hearings detailed the poor leadership in the military intelligence and military police units at the Abu Ghraib prison, a lack of adequate interrogator training, and uncertainties about the roles of contractors and the CIA. Add poor planning to that list, and you get a recipe for disaster that helped create an atmosphere where detainee abuse occurred.”

“The Fay Investigation did a good job of identifying the individuals responsible for the actual abuse of detainees,” added Representative Ellen Tauscher (CA). “Now that we’ve gotten to the bottom of the problem, we need to get to the top. Only if we do that can we prove that these horrible incidents don’t reflect the values of our military or America.”

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